

Carbon LPDT Meeting
Tuesday, February 4, 2014

Project Updates

- Projects that are over 5 years old or that have received the total amount of funds originally requested have been asked to re-submit a project application and provide a project update/presentation on what has been accomplished, how their project fits with WLCI goals, and other projects on a landscape-scale.
- Aspen Conservation Joint Venture – Larry Hicks: Larry gave a PowerPoint presentation. Larry provided some history on the area.
 - The goal of this project is to increase the health, vigor, and diversity of age-classes of the aspen stands in the Sierra Madres.
 - About 80,000 acres in the Sierra Madres are inhabited by aspen. Over 40% of this is old growth. Aspen is fire/disturbance-dependent species. There is conifer (sub-alpine fir) encroachment into the aspen. Aspen forests are used by a wide variety of wildlife. Additionally, aspen provides fuel breaks from pine monocultures.
 - Project started in 2007. Most treatments are mechanical. Only non-mechanical treatment was Sheep Mountain, which used fire to treat the area.
 - Target of the project is to treat 12,000 acres over 10 years. WLCI's money is doubled or tripled through their partner contributions.
 - On the completed treatments, they are seeing good aspen regrowth and also resurgence of other desirable mountain shrub communities (rose, serviceberry, mountain mahogany, currants), and forbs.
 - Worked with the Forest Service and drilling companies (Anadarko provided \$30k; Devon donated \$25k) to chip up some of the biomass taken out. Highly acidic soils require a lot of biomass in order to revegetate. This chipping operation costs approximately \$2k/hour to run. Conservation district purchased a large manure spreader to spread wood chips.
 - They have also used the biomass they have taken out as log structures in Savery Creek, Battle Creek, and Little Snake River stream enhancement projects.
 - On the Little Snake River, they have planted some cottonwood root balls and willow plantings are planned.
 - Last two years – there has been some commercial wood harvest, which has produced some economic benefit.
- Lower Encampment River - Jeff Streeter (Trout Unlimited) and Joe Parsons (SER Conservation District): (handout) Large watershed project. Partnering with WGFD, private landowners, WWNRT, WGFC, NRCS, and several other partners (see handout for complete list).
 - This area is highly unstable. The fisheries and agriculture lands have suffered from high erosion/sedimentation. Additionally, some of the stream has been overwidened, creating a braided channel in some places.
 - The goal of the project is to reconnect the watershed with its floodplain. They are currently in the 3rd year of this project. Thus far, 3,400 feet of stream channel

have been restored. The stream reach of the next landowner is 1,200 feet long. This stream reach is mostly private land, but public has floating access.

- Trout Unlimited is working with Stantec Engineering on revegetation. A challenge is the flow can fluctuate from as high as 800 cfs down to 10 cfs during irrigation. They are hoping to be able to provide advice on best practices for stream revegetation.
- They are seeing major improvement in the 1st section that was restored. Restored section shows an improved ability to push the sedimentation through the restored reaches. They have been using toewood to restore reaches, have reduced the angle of some meanders, also improving upland riparian areas along with the stream/aquatic habitat.
- Updates on Weed Projects – Susan Foley (BLM): (handout)
 - Ferris Mountain Leafy Spurge project: started in 2007, sagebrush mountain shrub country. The goal is to minimize weed spread and keep it out of the WSA. Dealing with leafy spurge, Russian knapweed, and whitetop (hoary cress). Many of these patches have existed for a long time. Attempting to contain these patches and minimize spread. A lot of this area is fairly rugged, therefore the remaining treatments will be on foot, rather than by horseback or ATV. To date the project costs have been \$300,266; of which WLCI has contributed \$167,126; and partner in-kind funding has been \$19,000. The Carbon County Weed & Pest helps with volunteers and managing the contract. Long-term follow-up is done by private landowners and BLM. Funding request for FY14 is for \$20,000. They would need by the funding by fall, but can use anytime.
 - Hay Reservoir Russian Knapweed: Project started in 2009, planned to continue into 2014 with maintenance treatments. Landowner will also follow up, as needed. Species of Concern are Russian knapweed, Swainson pea, whitetop, and some salt cedar. This project is located north of I-80 about 20 miles from the Tipton exit. There are a lot of sage-grouse around the reservoir. Deer, elk, antelope, livestock, etc. use this area. Did not get to do any treatments in FY13 (due to the furlough), but monitoring was done. Total project cost \$56,000. WLCI funding of \$41,000. Partner in-kind (landowner) of \$2,000. There are oil & gas wells in this area. The O&G company has assisted with the weed control. However, the wells have been sold and contact has not been made with the new owners. No request for FY14 funding. Will be requesting funding in FY15.
 - Pepperweed Partnership: Project started in 2009. This project is south of Rawlins on the Little Sage Creek down to the North Platte River (just south of I-80). This is a very remote area. Treating pepperweed, also have extensive Russian knapweed, and some salt cedar. The project encompasses approximately 20 miles of work, but there are only 5 access roads. They have used some aerial spraying and biological (insect) control. Total project cost \$138,340. Total WLCI funding \$100,000. Partner in-kind of \$3,500. They did not have access to the private land in FY13. They have roll-over funding that they will use in FY14. FY14 request of \$10,000 would need by late July.
 - Sand Creek Salt Cedar Control: This project started in 2008. It is west of Baggs, a tributary into the Little Snake River. Have also treated Muddy Creek and Sand Creek. Monitored 62 reservoirs and treated 32 reservoirs in FY13. Have been

using mechanical treatments (a big weed eater), and lop and spray, very labor intensive. Also worked north of Dadd. They are not always finding the salt cedar on a creek bottom or reservoir. Total project cost of \$219,040. Total WLCI funding of \$157,000. Partner in-kind of \$6,100. They are talking with partners to expand to the Little Snake (lot of private landowners); Carbon County Weed & Pest is involved in these discussions.

- Conduct Phase II – Mike Murry (BLM): Inherited this project from Grant Frost (WGFD). No additional funding is being requested for FY14.
- Platte Valley Mule Deer Initiative Projects – Mike Murry (BLM): No additional funding is being requested for FY14.
- Baggot Rocks Invasives – Mike Murry (BLM): They have requested \$10,000 funding for FY14. They would prefer to receive the money by July, but can use if they receive by September or October.
- Baggs Deer Crossing – Tony Mong (WGFD): FY14 funding is proposed at \$20,000. No representatives were at the LPDT meeting.
- Grizzly Fence Conversion – Dave Lewis (WGFD): FY14 funding is proposed at \$7,000. No representatives were at the LPDT meeting.
- Rawlins Fence Conversion – Andy Warren (BLM): FY14 funding is proposed at \$40,000. They submitted a FY14 application and provided copies at the meeting. They would like the money in May as they have a continuing contract from last year.
- Encampment River Stabilization – Kelley Owen (BLM): FY14 funding is proposed at \$16,700. The project began in FY13; however, no WLCI funding was provided. The goal of this project is to stabilize the riverbank in order to return proper hydraulic function to the riparian area, decrease in-channel erosion, decrease downstream sedimentation, protect water quality and improve aquatic habitat.

FY14 New Projects:

- Little Medicine Bow River Upland/Riparian Grazing Management Plan – Justin Garrison (Med Bow Conservation District): Goal of project is to improve upland and riparian habitats, using Best Management Practices. 2014 Ranking of 2. Total project funding of \$90,000. Proposed of \$80,000. They are working on NEPA clearances. They have received partner funding through WWNRT. They would need the funds by August or September.
- Riparian Habitat Improvement and Wildlife-Friendly Fence Conversion in the Platte Valley – Mike Murry (BLM): Goal of the project is to convert fences inhibiting wildlife movement to wildlife-friendly fences. Total project request is \$30,000. 2014 ranking was 4th. Partner funding from WWNRT and RMEF. 30 miles of stream habitat would be improved. Requested FY14 funding from WLCI of \$30,000. They would like to receive money by June, but would be able to use funding any time before September.
- Encampment River School Restoration – Jim States: The goal of this project is to improve riparian habitat on the Encampment River. Received a 2014 Ranking of 5th. There has been push-back from the landowner. This project most likely will not be ready for FY14. Requested to be moved to FY15 funding.
- Upper Platte Valley Weed Management Area – Susan Foley: Goal of project is to control invasive and noxious weeds. 2014 Ranking of 6. Total project funding request is \$70,000. Proposed funding is \$35,000. Project could use \$35,000 funding from WLCI

for FY14. They would need it by September, but they can do treatments into the fall. They have some additional BLM funding.

Potential FY15 Projects:

- **Joe Parsons (SER Conservation District):** They have a project that is going to be going in this fall, probably in October. It is a riparian project where there is currently a lot of bank erosion and cutting going on. Losing a lot of Ag meadow land. NRCS is working with SER Conservation District and they have applied for WWNRT funding.
- **Katie Cheeseborough (WGFD):** Has two similar projects that are geographically separated. Big Creek and T-A Ranches. Jim suggested including both projects in one proposal as they are occurring on both ends of the Platte Valley.
- **Steve Loose (Medicine Bow National Forest, based in Saratoga):** He has been working on a Columbia sharp-tailed grouse project since 2007. They are looking to expand that and get some help with controlling invasive species. The Columbia sharp-tailed grouse population is in south-central WY and northern Colorado, in the SW end of the Sierra Madres, close to Battle Mountain. Very few sharp-tailed grouse occur in Wyoming. This area is considered to have three sub-populations. They do not always lek at the same locations. A third of the leks are located in Wyoming. Past projects – through a travel management exercise, the forest has decommissioned about 20 miles of roads; ripped out, berm, sign, and reseed. These grouse use sagebrush and mountain shrubs, and also an aspen component. They have worked with Carbon County Weed & Pest and the Elk Foundation trying to control musk thistle, Canada thistle, toadflax, and other weeds. Carbon County has been treating the largest, most accessible areas. Additionally, the FS has used a stem weevil for biological control of the toadflax. They are looking for funding in order to treat some of the less accessible areas. Other projects that link to this project – mule deer migration goes through the treatment area, elk crucial range, winter range, and parturition; Colorado River cutthroat trout occur in the area. They plan to only use biological controls and hand pulling near aquatic areas. They are requesting \$8,000/year for 4 years. They have a match through the RMEF and the Carbon County Weed & Pest for \$8,000. The FS is also contributing about \$20,000 to Carbon County Weed & Pest.

Prioritization Process: In past years, each individual has a vote. It was noted that some other LPDTs give one vote to each agency or organization. The group discussed and the Carbon LPDT decided to keep their prioritization process as it had been in the past. At the May meeting, each individual LPDT member attending the meeting will get to vote on the project prioritization.

Funding: There was a brief discussion of the funding process. The CT reminded the group that the Executive Committee has previously voted that 65% of the fiscal budget will be used for continuing projects with 35% going towards new projects.

Eric Decker asked if a review of the BLM priorities would be helpful for the LPDT. LPDT members indicated that this would be helpful. Andy Warren noted that National and local BLM priorities don't always mesh. Eric Decker also noted that he met with most of the project leads

at the State BLM Office. He received information on how to make sure that the widgets reported for WLCI will match up with the information that the State Office requires.

CAP: The CAP will be out for review to all the LPDTs soon. The CAP is made up of three parts – first is large landscape level priorities; second is local team objectives; and third is a real detailed story showing what you are doing, what the LPDTs' priorities are, and what the LPDTs are planning to do. Pat will send out directions with the CAP. Pat asked everyone to focus on examining if the priority areas fit, do the boundaries make sense (not too big/too small), and do the maps appropriately depict your project area. WLCI wants to tell the story of how the past projects, current projects, and proposed projects tie together to work towards combined conservation objectives on a landscape-scale. The CAP writers have had to make some assumptions as sometimes this information is not clear in project write-ups/annual reports/etc. LPDTs will be given a 3-week period to review the CAP. The CAP team is also looking for suggestions on how to make the report more attractive. The CAP is a road map of WLCI's actions over the next five years. However, the report will also be used to tell WLCI's story to Agencies and to hand out to industry proponents who may be looking for opportunities to assist in on-the-ground projects. The CAP team would like to have the CAP finalized by the June EC Meeting.

Science Workshop: STAC is working to plan the next WLCI Science Workshop (2015). The team is exploring a combined workshop with the Wyoming Chapter of the Wildlife Society. Considering travel restrictions, this may enable more people to attend the meetings. The Wildlife Society has indicated that they are willing to explore this possibility, but until their new board/president is elected, they do not want to vote on the matter. There are still a lot of details that need to be worked out. STAC hopes that this might promote more presentations from on-the-ground managers. It was noted that WLCI typically likes to have the Science Workshop in or close to the WLCI area. Laramie/Lander/Riverton/Evanston/Pinedale were all proposed for meeting location ideas. The WLCI Science Workshop typically has about 200 attendees, while the Wildlife Society annual meeting typically draws about 100 attendees.

Suggestions for the EC Meeting and Tour: The CT asked the group for suggestions of a location for the Summer EC Meeting and ideas of projects that the EC could tour. This meeting would be either in June or September of 2014. Suggestions are – Grand Valley Ditch, although June wouldn't be an optimal time for a visit; some of the riverwork (PFW); Aspen (the EC saw early in the project – 5 years ago, would be nice to show the progress that has occurred); Encampment River (could be high water, good to tie in with upland work, mule deer work, fencing/grazing); Kelly's project (Encampment River Stabilization) – pre-construction. Baggs/Saratoga or Rawlins were suggested as meeting locations.

Andy Warren mentioned that he had been talking with Pat Anderson re: getting an update on what local projects the USGS was working on.

Reminder: FY15 project applications are due on **Monday, April 14th**. The CT will compile and send out prior to the May LPDT meeting. If you have a proposed FY15 project, it is suggested that you have a presentation ready, either paper or PowerPoint presentation.

The next Carbon LPDT meeting has been scheduled for **Tuesday, May 6, 2014**, at 10 am at the Rawlins BLM Office.